

REMARKS

1. In response to the Office Action mailed December 1, 2006, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. Claims 3-9, 11-21, 23, 28-32 and 40-54 were last presented for examination. In the outstanding Office Action, claims 3-7, 11, 19, 21, 23, 28-32, 40-42, 44 and 45 are rejected, claims 8, 9, 12-18 and 20 are withdrawn from consideration, and claims 46-54 are allowed. By the foregoing Amendments, claims 41 and 50 have been amended, and claims 1-40 and 42-43 have been cancelled. No claims have been added. Thus, upon entry of this paper, claims 41 and 44-54 will be pending in this application. Of these twelve (12) claims, two (2) claims (claims 41 and 46) are independent. Based upon the above Amendments and following Remarks, Applicants respectfully request that all outstanding rejections be reconsidered, and that they be withdrawn.

Examiner Interview

2. Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended in the telephonic interview conducted on January 17, 2007. During the interview the Examiner indicated that entry of the above Amendments would place this application in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

3. Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's allowance of claims 46-54.

4. Applicants also note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claim 43 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to including all of the limitations of the base claim and intervening claims. Applicants have cancelled claim 43, and have amended claim 41 to include the limitations of claim 43. Applicants note that during the noted Interview the Examiner confirmed that such an amendment to claim 41 will place that claim in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claim 41.

5. In this paper Applicants have cancelled previously withdrawn claims 1-40 and 42-43. Applicants reserve the right to pursue these claims in a future continuation or divisional patent application.

Claim Objections

6. Claim 40 has been objected to by the Examiner because of informalities. Claim 40 has been cancelled rendering the objection thereof moot.

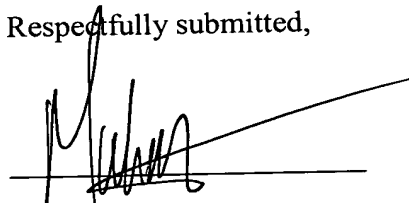
7. Claim 50 has been objected to because it was a sentence fragment. Applicants have amended claim 50 to recite "resiliently flexible material" rather than "resiliently flexible." In the noted Interview the Examiner agreed that claim 50 is now a complete sentence and that the objection of claim 50 will be withdrawn.

Conclusion

8. In view of the foregoing, this application should be in condition for allowance. A notice to his effect is respectfully requested.

9. Applicants reserve the right to pursue any cancelled claims or other subject matter disclosed in this application in a continuation or divisional application, cancellations and amendments of above claims, therefore, are not to be construed as an admission regarding the patentability of any claims and Applicants reserve the right to pursue such claims in a continuation or divisional application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael G. Verga', is written over a horizontal line.

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